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ABSTRACT

Findings of the National Commission on Testing and Public Policy concerning problems in testing are reported. Recommendations are proposed for restructuring educational and employment testing to help people develop their talents and become more productive, and to help institutions become more productive, accountable, and just. Over a 3-year period, the Commission heard from a range of experts, reviewed over 50 papers, and convened five public hearings. The Commission concluded that current testing, predominantly multiple-choice testing, is relied upon too heavily, and often lacks public accountability. Current testing practices can lead to unfairness in the allocation of opportunities and can undermine social policies by deflecting attention from fundamental educational problems. The following eight recommendations are provided: (1) reorientation of testing policies and practices to promote the development of human talent; (2) redirection of testing programs from an overreliance on multiple-choice tests toward alternative forms of assessment; (3) use of test scores only when they relate directly to the decision to be made; (4) demonstration that tests measure characteristics relevant to the opportunities being allocated; (5) removal of reliance on test scores as the sole basis of decision; (6) improved assessment of the effectiveness of institutions; (7) greater public accountability; and (8) expansion of research and development programs to promote fairness in testing. Four figures supplement the text. An eight-page section, "Reference Notes," relates the report's findings to those of other published studies. Two appendices describe and list the hearings and invited papers. (72 references) (SLD)

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